DC
SUICIDE SQUAD
BY JOHN OSTRANDER, LUKE McDONNELL & KARL KESEL
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ESPECIALLY WHEN IT'S SITTING IN THE CAR WITH ME.
LIGHTEN UP. I'M NOT REALLY FLAG-- JUST A PROJECTION OF HIM. YOU'VE GOT ME ON YOUR MIND, THAT'S ALL.

DAMN STRAIGHT! I HAD THE WHOLE TOLLIVER/CRAY THING COVERED! DIDN'T NEED YOUR HELP!
NOW, THANKS TO YOU, OUR COVER'S BLOWN BUT GOOD!

IF YOU HAD TOLD ME WHAT YOU WERE PLANNING, I WOULDN'T HAVE FELT THE NECESSITY TO DO SOMETHING!
I DON'T HAVE TO TELL YOU SQUAT! BESIDES, I DIDN'T TRUST YOU! NEVER DID!

I KNOW.
I WASN'T THE ONE YOU WANTED TO LEAD THE SQUAD SO YOU MADE MY LIFE HELL. YOU STILL WANT ME TO BE YOUR WHIPPING BOY.

AS LONG AS YOU CAN BLAME ME, NONE OF WHAT HAPPENED IS YOUR FAULT, IS IT?

LEMME GUESS. IT'S MINE, RIGHT?
WHOSE FAULT YOU THINK IT IS? THE KING OF GAME?
YOU SAID-- AND I QUOTE -- "YOU WILL KEEP HIM" --MEANING FLAG-- "FROM KILLING TOLLIVER AND CRAY. BY WHATEVER MEANS NECESSARY."
I DIDN'T MEAN BY KILLING CRAY YOURSELF!
THEN YOU SHOULDA SAID SO.
POTHOLE COMING UP.
WHY THE HELL DIDN'T YOU JUST GET YOURSELF KILLED IN THAT RUN-IN WITH THE COPS?!
NOT MY FAULT. I TRIED, DIDN'T I?
OF COURSE, LA GRIEVE WARNED YOU ABOUT SENDING ME OUT AFTER FLAG.
TOLD YOU WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN. BUT YOU JUST WOULDN'T LISTEN, WOULD YOU?
BUT NONE OF THIS IS YOUR FAULT, IS IT? IT NEVER IS.

WHAT'S DONE IS DONE. DON'T MATTER WHOSE FAULT IT IS, ANYMORE.
PROBLEM NOW IS I'M STARING A CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRY IN THE FACE, WITH NONE OTHER THAN EVE EDEN'S FATHER CHAIRING THE COMMITTEE! GOTTA SOMEHOW KEEP THE SQUAD ALIVE AND KEEP CHECKMATE SECRET!
I KNOW WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING DURING THE INVASION. TRYING TO MAKE THE CONCEPT BEHIND YOUR SQUAD AS VISIBLE ...AS VIABLE ...AS POSSIBLE.
IT'S CALLED PR.-- HOODWINKING THE AMERICAN PUBLIC INTO BUYING A TRULY REPUGNANT IDEA!
I HAPPEN TO BELIEVE IN WHAT WE'RE DOING SENATOR EDEN.
COSTS OVER A THOUSAND DOLLARS A DAY TO KEEP ONE SLUG IN JAIL. JUST GUARANTEEING THE TAXPAYER GETS HIS MONEY'S WORTH!
HOW ALTRUISTIC. OF COURSE, THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE POWER YOU CURRENTLY WIELD.
AND YOU LIKE POWER, DON'T YOU, MRS. WALLER?
SCREECH!
THAT'S IT! I HAVE HAD IT! GET OUT OF MY CAR AND OUT OF MY MIND, THE LOT OF YOU!
NOW I KNOW YOU'RE CRACKING UP, WOMAN!
YOU CAN'T EVEN WIN ARGUMENTS WITH YOURSELF!

YEAH, YOU CAN DEBRIEF WITH ME, OR WAIT UNTIL THE WALL RETURNS FROM NORAD MOUNTAIN.
SOMETHING TELLS ME YOU'D RATHER NOT DEAL WITH HER CHARMING, WINSOME PERSONALITY JUST RIGHT NOW.
YOU GOT THAT RIGHT.
WARDEN
ECONOMOS
FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, WALLER'S RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ENTIRE TOLLIVER MESS, JOHN... IF SHE HADN'T RIDDEN FLAG SO DAMN HARD... TRUSTED HIM...
NO ONE IS THRILLED WITH THE WAY SHE HANDLED IT, BEN. BUT UNFORTUNATELY, LIFE IS WHAT IT IS.
HAS FLAG SHOWN UP YET?
NOPE. GONE TO GROUND, APPARENTLY. SOME REPORTS SUGGEST HE'S LEFT THE COUNTRY.
GOOD. HOPE HE EVADES EXTRADITION.
I'M BEAT. LET'S DO THIS, JOHN, WHILE I'M STILL COHERENT.
READY WHEN YOU ARE.
WOULD YOU BELIEVE WE WERE GREETED IN MOSCOW BY THE SAME CREEP THAT THREW US OUT OF RUSSIA LAST YEAR?

"YOU MIGHT WANT TO CONSIDER *SHAVING*, JOHN. TWILLIBY RESEMBLES YOU AND YOU *DON'T* WANT THAT."

JUST LIKE THE BAD PENNY, MR. TURNER— YOU KEEP ON TURNING UP. ONLY THIS TIME YOU'VE BROUGHT COMPANIONS THAT ARE MORE... *EXOTIC* IN APPEARANCE.

"DIPLOMATIC PRIG. FORTUNATELY BORIS RAZUMIHIN, THE HEAD OF JUSTICE LEAGUE MOSCOW, WAS MORE CONGENIAL *AND* HELPFUL."

THEY ARE GUESTS OF THE SOVIET STATE, COMRADE TWILLIBY. WE NEED ALL THE HELP WE CAN GET.

COMRADE TURNER, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE. PLEASE FOLLOW ME.

JUST WHO ARE WE FIGHTING, COMRADE RAZUMIHIN?

A RACE KNOWN AS THE *OKAARANS*, DEDICATED TO THE ART OF COMBAT. YOUR STARFIRE OF THE GROUP CALLED THE TITANS TRAINED WITH THEM.

THE HAWK-WINGED CREATURES CALLED THE *THANAGARIANS* ARE THEIR ALLIES. DISGUSTING THINGS.

THEY LOOK FORMIDABLE.

THEY ARE. JLI RECORDS STATE THE OKAARANS ARE WEAPONS MASTERS AND SUPERB FIGHTERS.

TO OPPOSE THE OKAARANS WE HAVE OUR OWN ARMY, THE ROCKET REDS, THE NEW GUARDIANS-- AND YOU THREE.

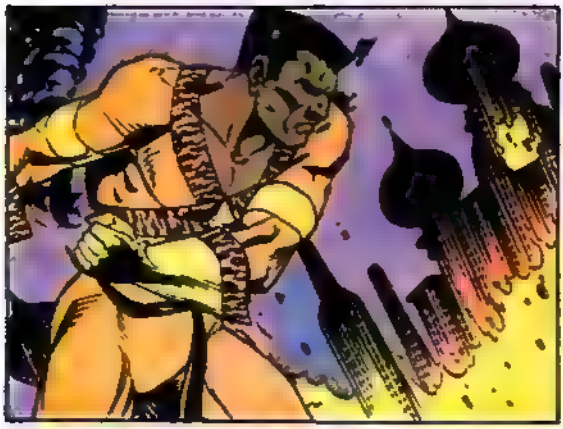
A VERY IMPRESSIVE SHOWING.

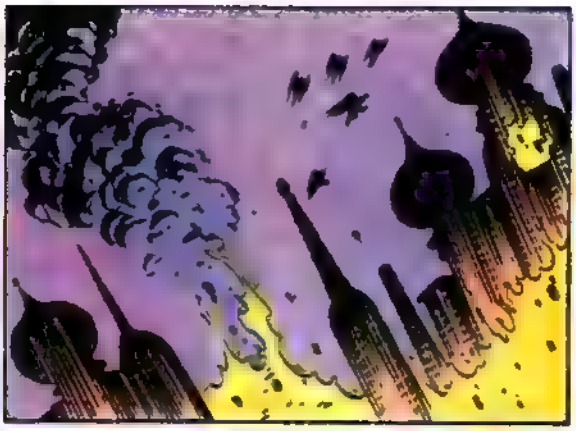
DON'T WORRY, COMRADE RAZUMIHIN. OUR HEARTS ARE PURE, AND WE HAVE THE STRENGTH OF TWENTY MEN.

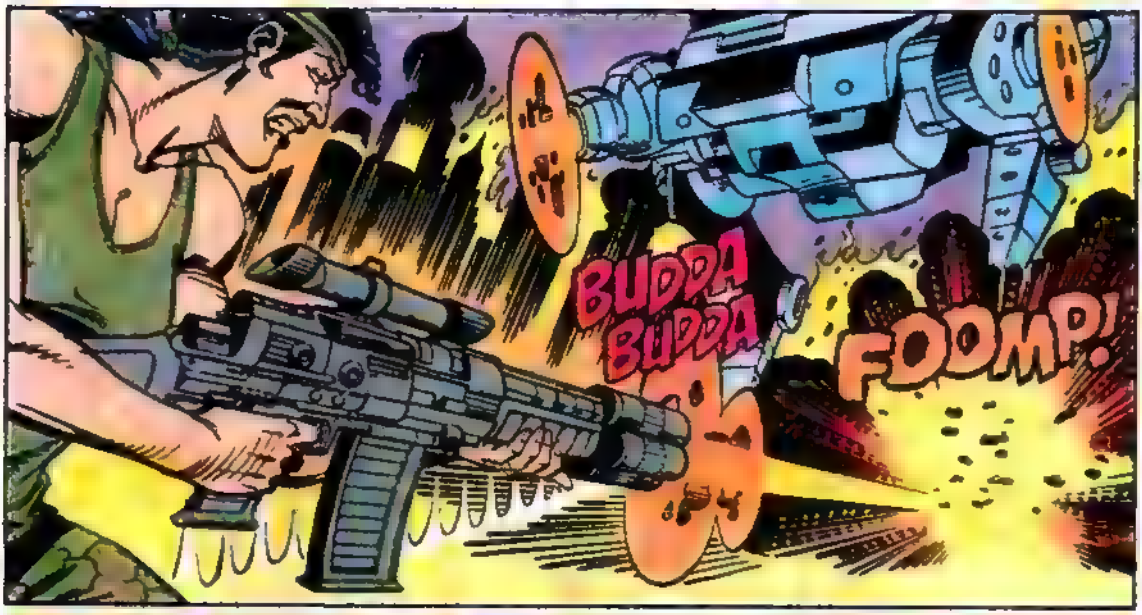
"THEY SHUTTLED US OVER TO WHERE THE OKAARANS HAD FORTIFIED A POSITION NEAR THE KAZAN STATION, NOT FAR FROM RED SQUARE. THE RED ARMY HAD TAKEN UP A CONTRARY POSITION NEARBY AND WE FOUND OURSELVES PLOPPED IN THE MIDDLE OF A FIREFIGHT."
CRASH!
KHOOOSH!
BOOM BOOM
WE NEED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THEIR AIR FORCE!
I CAN HANDLE THIS
GRRRAAHHH!
7

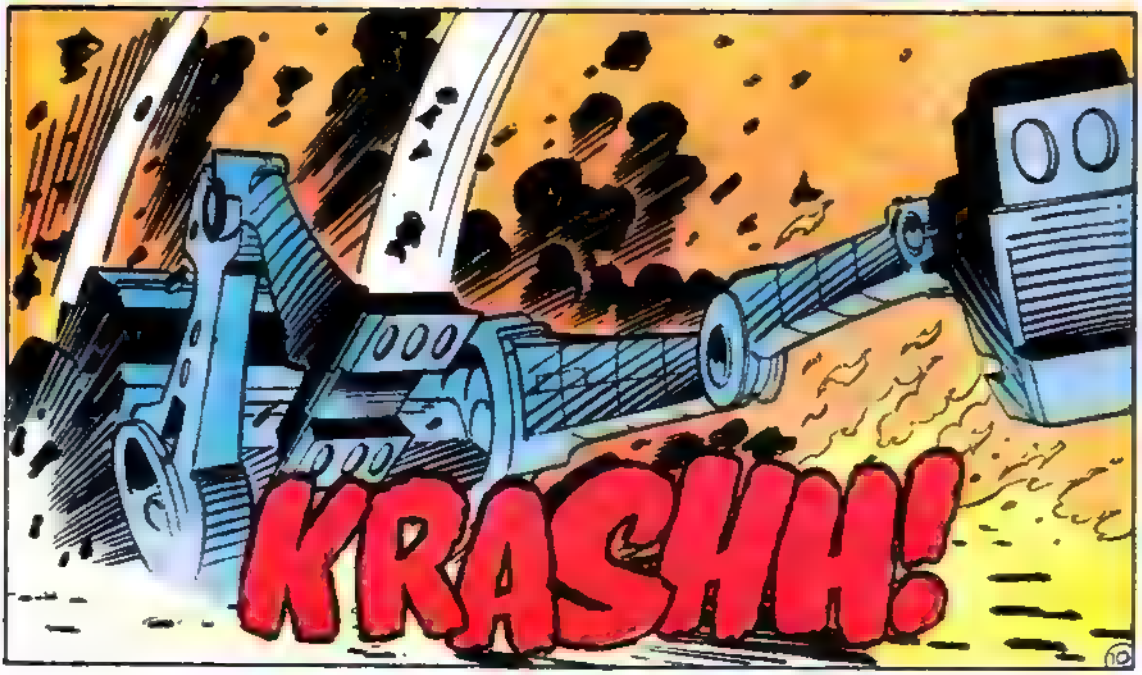
GRRRRR!
CRACK
KRAK
THUMP
SNARRRL!

HAWROOOM!
TAO!
WELL! THERE'S MORE TO THE WOMAN THAN I THOUGHT!
SHE MIGHT ACTUALLY BE USEFUL!
BDAM! BDAM! BDEW!
VIP VIP VIP
ONE SIDE.
THIS NEEDS FIREPOWER, NOT FANCY KICKING.
BUD-DOOM! BUD-DOOM! BUD-DOOM!
YEEE-HAAAA!





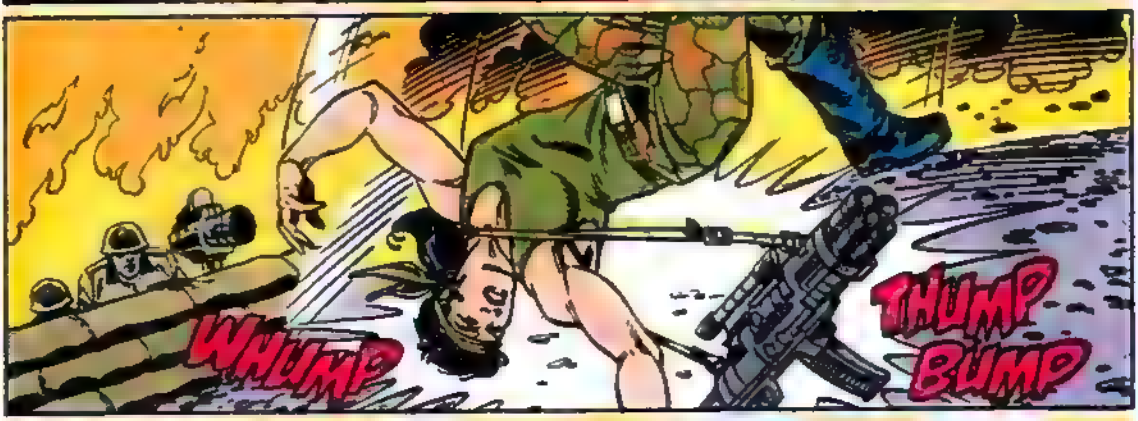

BUDDA BUDDA
FOOMP!

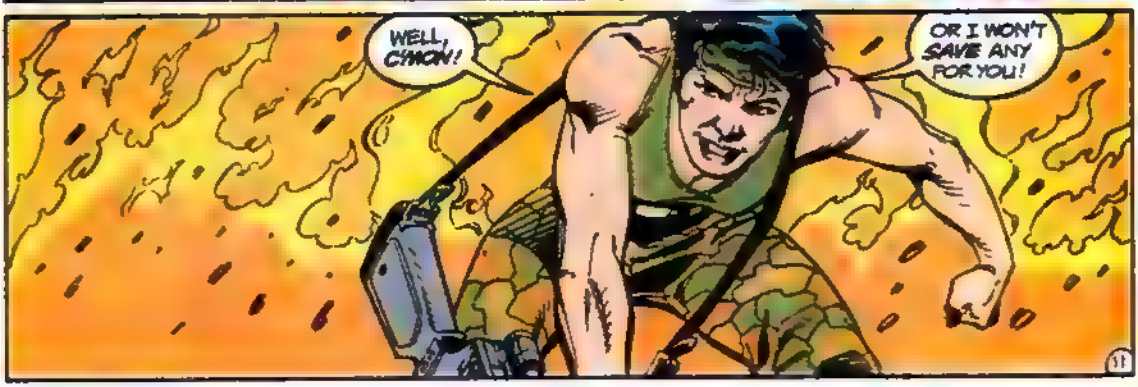

KRASHH!

ERRNNK!

DIE, YOU STAR-SUCKING VERMIN!
BAM BAM BAM

SHAKABADOOOM


WHUMP
THUMP BUMP


WELL, C'MON!
OR I WON'T SAVE ANY FOR YOU!

YAAAA!
BUDDA BUDDA
RAAAAH!
WHOMP!
FUMP!

<COMRADE! WHAT NOW? TO STAY IN THIS POSITION IS TO DIE!>
I DON'T UNDERSTAND THE LINGO, WORM, BUT I KNOW THE MELODY. I DON'T KNOW! KEEP YER STUPID HEADS DOWN!
VIP VIP VIP
<LOOK! HELP COMES! ROCKET REDS!>
GREAT! NOW WE'RE STARTING TO PARTY!
WHOOMP!
SHRAAK!
VIP VIP
WHOMP!
BEEDEEDEE
13

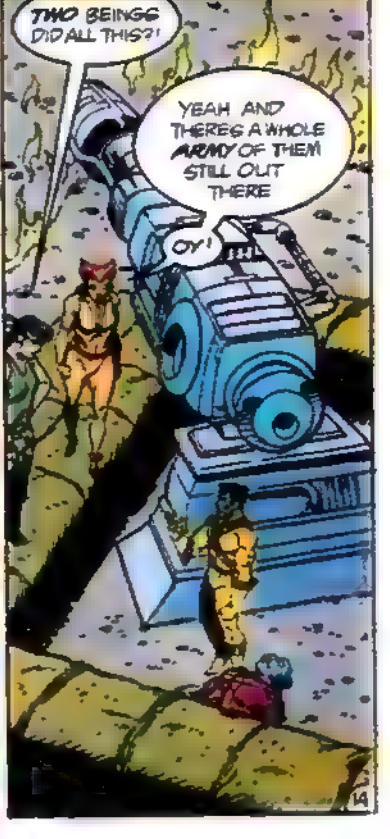
PITIFUL! YOUR ROCKETS TURNED TAIL AND RAN! TIME TO GET THIS SHOW-BOAT MOVING!
CLAK
ALL RIGHT, YOU BUNCH OF OFF-WORLD MAGGOTS! LET'S DECIDE WHO OWNS THIS STREET!

YAAAAA...

HA!

RELAX. I GOT HIM.
DIDN'T SEE ME COMING.

GOT HIM?! THERE WAS ONLY ONE?!
NO. THERE WAS ANOTHER IN THAT BATTLE-WALKER YOU DOWNED.


TWO BEINGS DID ALL THIS?!
YEAH AND THERE'S A WHOLE ARMY OF THEM STILL OUT THERE
OY!

"WELL, THINGS GOT ROUGHY AFTER THAT.

"WE LINKED UP WITH MEMBERS OF THE RED ARMY AND THE NEW GUARDIANS, AS WELL.

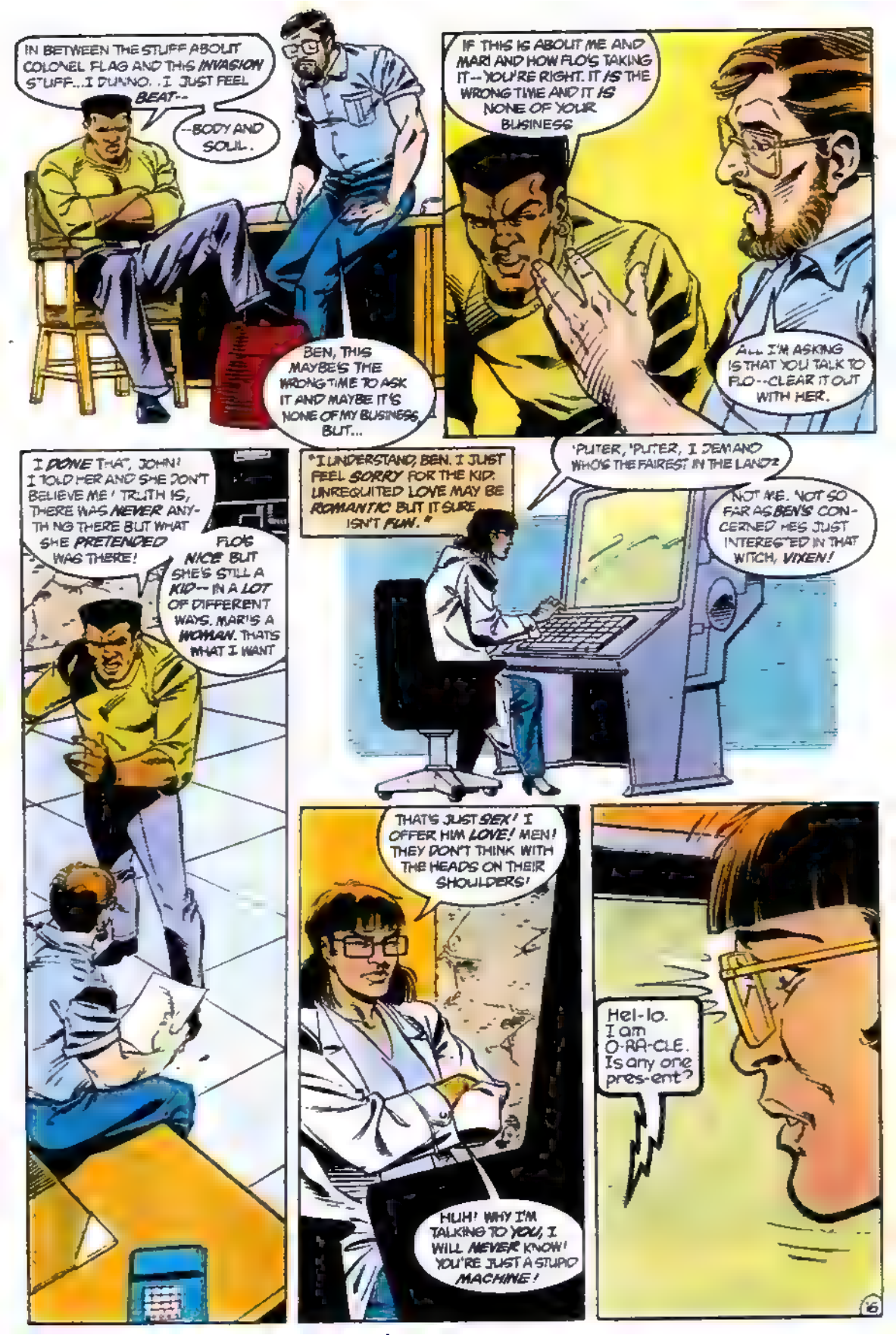
"OTHER SOV HEROES SHOWED UP, INCLUDING SOME I'D NEVER HEARD ABOUT, LIKE THESE BUNCH OF KIDS CALLED *SOYUZ*. OH YEAH, YOU MIGHT WANT TO UPDATE THE FILE ON *STALNOVOLK*. HE WAS OUT AND ABOUT, TOO, THOUGH I UNDERSTAND IT WAS JUST OUT OF A HOSPITAL BED.

"DIDN'T LOOK GOOD, THOUGH HE FOUGHT WELL.

"IT WAS REAL NASTY STUFF STREET TO STREET. WE BARELY HELD THEM FOR A LONG TIME.

"I HEARD SOMEWHERE THAT A *THIRD* OF THE CITY'S POPULATION BOUGHT IT, THOUGH I DON'T KNOW HOW *TRUE* THAT IS. I *KNOW* IT WAS *GRIM*.

"THE TIDE TURNED EVENTUALLY BUT, SO FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, WE STILL HAD BEATEN THEM WHEN THE ALLIANCE SURRENDERED. I GUESS THAT MAKES US THE *WINNERS*. I GUESS."


IN BETWEEN THE STUFF ABOUT COLONEL FLAG AND THIS INVASION STUFF...I DUNNO. I JUST FEEL BEAT--
--BODY AND SOUL.
BEN, THIS MAYBE'S THE WRONG TIME TO ASK IT AND MAYBE IT'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS, BUT...
IF THIS IS ABOUT ME AND MARI AND HOW FLO'S TAKING IT--YOU'RE RIGHT. IT IS THE WRONG TIME AND IT IS NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS
ALL I'M ASKING IS THAT YOU TALK TO FLO--CLEAR IT OUT WITH HER.
I DONE THAT, JOHN! I TOLD HER AND SHE DON'T BELIEVE ME! TRUTH IS, THERE WAS NEVER ANYTHING THERE BUT WHAT SHE PRETENDED WAS THERE!
FLO'S NICE BUT SHE'S STILL A KID--IN A LOT OF DIFFERENT WAYS. MARI'S A WOMAN. THAT'S WHAT I WANT
"I UNDERSTAND, BEN. I JUST FEEL SORRY FOR THE KID. UNREQUITED LOVE MAY BE ROMANTIC BUT IT SURE ISN'T FUN."
'PUTER, 'PUTER, I DEMAND WHO'S THE FAIREST IN THE LAND?
NOT ME. NOT SO FAR AS BEN'S CONCERNED HES JUST INTERESTED IN THAT WITCH, VIXEN!
THAT'S JUST SEX! I OFFER HIM LOVE! MEN! THEY DON'T THINK WITH THE HEADS ON THEIR SHOULDERS!
HUH! WHY I'M TALKING TO YOU, I WILL NEVER KNOW! YOU'RE JUST A STUPID MACHINE!
Hel-lo. I am O-RA-CLE. Is any one pres-ent?
6

SIMON LAGRIEVE'S OFFICE

WE HAVE THE POTENTIAL REPLACEMENTS DOWN TO THESE FEW. LET'S REVIEW OUR EVALUATIONS, SHALL WE? *DOCTOR LIGHT.*

SUBJECT HAS DEMONSTRATED A TRUE AVERSION TO CHILDREN. PHOBIAS AND PARANOIAS SEEM TO HAVE INCREASED OVER THE YEARS, AS HAS HIS EGO'S NEED TO DENY THIS.

TRANSLATED. HE'S A COWARD WHO COMPENSATES BY LYING AND BRAGGADOCIO. HE'D BE PERFECT.

LET'S TRY TO KEEP OUR OBJECTIVITY, MARNIE. *PUNCH AND JEWELEE.*

ON THE SURFACE, THEY APPEAR TO BE YUPPIES BUT WITHOUT ANY SENSE OF RIGHT OR WRONG-- ONLY WHAT'S GOOD OR NOT GOOD FOR THEM. SUGGESTS SOCIOPATHIC BEHAVIOR. WALLER WILL *LOVE* THEM.

MARNIE--*PLEASE!* COUNT VERTIGO.

HIS HISTORY OF GRANDIOSE ACTION FOLLOWED BY DEEP MELANCHOLY SUGGESTS MANIC/DEPRESSION WHICH MAY BE HEREDITARY. WALLER WILL HAVE A *LOT* OF FUN MESSING WITH *HIS* MIND.

MARNIE, THAT'S *ENOUGH!!!*

YES, IT IS

I'M *QUITTING,* DOCTOR LA GRIEVE

FLOYD SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN SENT ON THAT MISSION. OUR RECOMMENDATIONS MEAN *NOTHING*-- OTHER THAN TO FIND NEW *CANNON FODDER* FOR WALLER!

SHE DEBASES EVERYTHING I'VE BEEN TRAINED TO DO AND I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE I'VE GOT TO GO.

LET'S FINISH THIS LIST, MARNIE-- AND THEN, PERHAPS, I'LL GO WITH YOU.

SHRIKE.

EVE?
Yiiii!
TOM! WAIT A SEC UNTIL I PULL THE SHADOWSTUFF BACK IN ME!
SORRY
MY CONTROL IS LESS WHEN I'M ASLEEP. THE SHADOWS SOMETIMES GET A LITTLE TOO PROTECTIVE OF ME.
YEAH, I... UH...COULD SEE THAT!
SO
WHAT'S NEW?

HAHAHAHAHAHA
WELL, MARK THAT DOWN AS ONE OF THE SILLIER QUESTIONS I EVER ASKED.
HOW ARE YOU, EVE?
SHOT. BUT I'M GETTING BETTER. OR I WAS UNTIL YOU MADE ME LAUGH LIKE THAT. I THINK I STRAINED MY STITCHES.
OH, CRIPES! I'M SORRY!
DE NADA. I HEAR YOU'VE BEEN PART OF THIS INVASION STUFF. SO TELL ME -- WHAT DID YOU DO IN THE WAR, DADDY?
IT WAS MISERY AND BOREDOM, PUNCTUATED BY MOMENTS OF HORROR AND STARK RAVING FEAR.
LIKE MOST WARS, YOU HAD TO HAVE BEEN IN THEM FOR THE STORIES TO REALLY MEAN ANYTHING.
WAIT! I TAKE THAT BACK! THERE'S ONE STORY I THINK YOU WOULD LIKE!
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"MY HALF OF THE SQUAD WAS DOWN IN AUSTRALIA. THE WALL WAS EXTENDING THE CONCEPT OF THE SQUAD BY HAVING WHAT SEEMED LIKE A BATTALION OF BADGUYS IN THE RANKS. I WAS ALONG MAINLY TO RIDE HERD

"THE *OTHER* TEAM LEADER, IF YOU CAN BELIEVE IT, WAS NONE OTHER THAN CAPTAIN BOOMERANG. NOT ONLY THAT, BUT HE WAS PRETTY EFFECTIVE SEEMED TO TAKE THE ALIEN INVASION OF AUSTRALIA VERY *PERSONAL*.

"AFTER THE ALIEN SURRENDER, HE EVEN INSISTED ON CONDUCTING A PERSONAL TOUR OF ONE OF HIS FAVORITE CITIES."

SYDNEY, OLD SHEILA! LEMME HAVE A DEKKO ATCHER! I JUST LOBBED IN AND I'M LOOKING TO DO A BIT OF THE NAUGHTY!

YER HERO'S HOME, DARLIN'! BREAK OUT THE BEER AND THE PLONK! EVERYTHING'S EXTRA GROUSE!

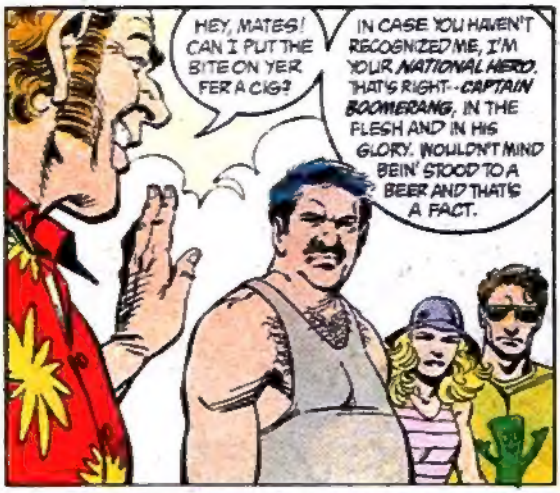
"HIS LINGO WAS EVEN MORE IMPENETRABLE THAN USUAL."

IT DOES ME GOOD, MATE, TO STAND IN THE MOTHER COUNTRY AGAIN, I CAN TELL YOU

ACTUALLY, WE'RE ON WATER

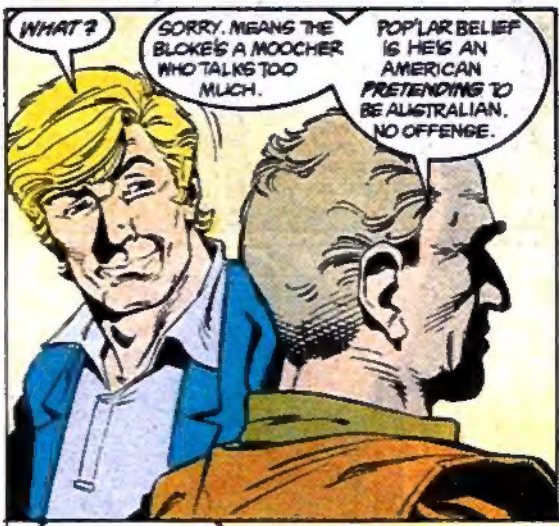
FINEST PEOPLE OF GOD'S GREEN EARTH— ME FELLOW AUSSIES! GIVE YER THE SHIRT OFF THEIR BACKS

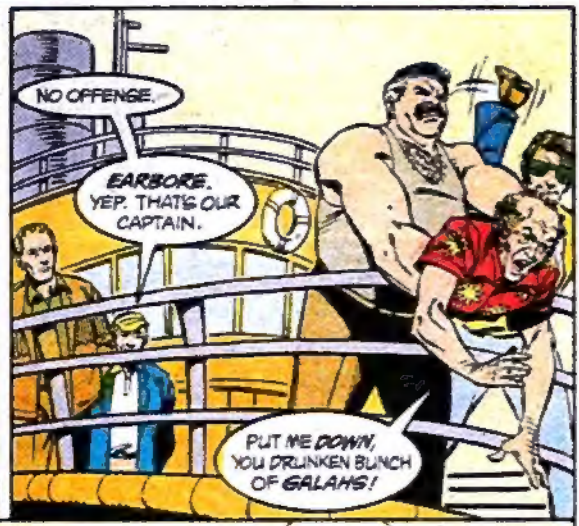
HAVE A DEKKO AT THIS

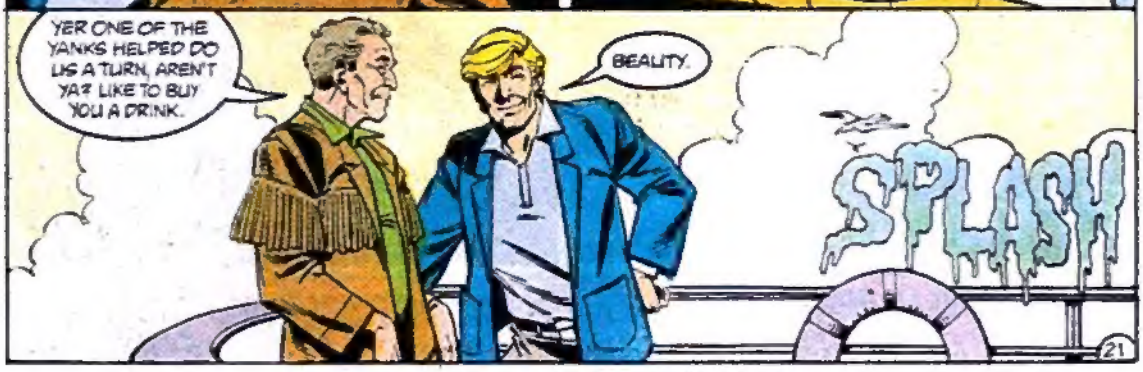

HEY, MATES! CAN I PUT THE BITE ON YER FER A CIG?
IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T RECOGNIZED ME, I'M YOUR NATIONAL HERO. THAT'S RIGHT--CAPTAIN BOOMERANG, IN THE FLESH AND IN HIS GLORY. WOULDN'T MIND BEIN' STOOD TO A BEER AND THAT'S A FACT.

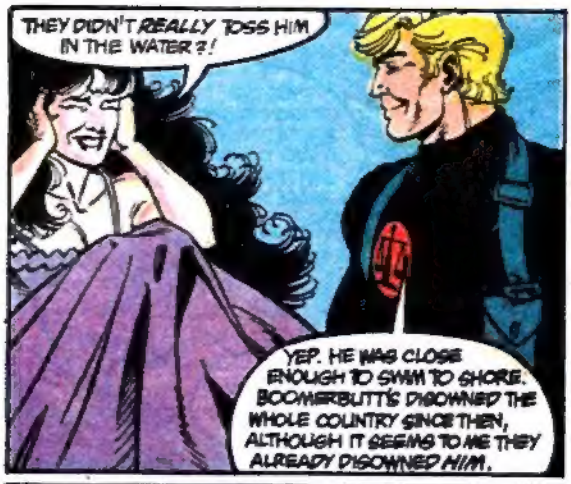
YEAH, I KNOW YER.
YER THE DINGO CRIMINAL WHAT'S BEEN GIVING A BAD NAME TO AUSTRALIA ALL THESE YEARS.
HOLD ON! SHOW SOME RESPECT! I JUST SAVED ALL YER BLOODY ACRES!

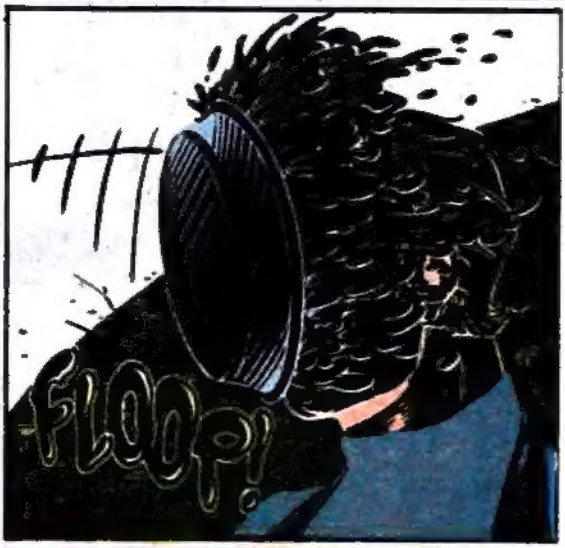
HE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE WINNING ANY FRIENDS.
HIM? BEEN A NATIONAL EMBARRASSMENT FOR YEARS. THE FELLA'S A BLUDGER AND AN EARBORE TO BOOT.


WHAT?
SORRY. MEANS THE BLOKE'S A MOOCHER WHO TALKS TOO MUCH.
POP'LAR BELIEF IS HE'S AN AMERICAN PRETENDING TO BE AUSTRALIAN. NO OFFENGE.


NO OFFENGE.
EARBORE. YEP. THAT'S OUR CAPTAIN.
PUT ME DOWN, YOU DRUNKEN BUNCH OF GALAHS!


YER ONE OF THE YANKS HELPED DO US A TURN, AREN'T YA? LIKE TO BUY YOU A DRINK.
BEAUTY.
SPLASH





BE SURE TO READ ***INVASION!* #3** THIS WEEK FOR THE FINALE AND THEN COME BACK FOR OUR 2ND ANNIVERSARY ISSUE AS THE SQUAD IS CHANGED ***FOREVER!***

SUICIDE NOTES

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Dear Folks,

Issue #19 reaffirms the feeling I've had for some time, that being, no matter how many super-folks are within the pages of this book, the nerve and heart of the book is Amanda Waller.

It is so refreshing to find a strong, intelligent woman who isn't a beauty-contest winner, or for that matter, a saintly altruist. In other words, a human.

This woman is so much more interesting than a dozen spandex-clad bimbos with huge mcguffies spouting drek about man's inhumanity, or mutants bemoaning destiny's uneven hand.

John Ostrander, this woman is, to my knowledge, the best characterization of any in the comics.

I'm really looking forward to another confrontation between Amanda Waller and Batman. I'd love to see the two of them forced into a position where they have to save and depend on each other.

Thanks to all for a book that continues to be better than I expect.

C. Wayne Owens
5436 Charlotte
Kansas City, MO 64110

*****

Dear Bob,

Boy, it is really refreshing to see a positive portrayal of clergy in a comic book such as Father Craemer in SS #198. I agree there are charlatans and liars on pulpits everywhere. But, for every one of those in the public eye, there are a hundred good men and women all over the world quietly doing God's work.

And many of these people have words of wisdom, words of comfort to offer in our times of distress. The exchange between the good Father and Eve on pages 10 and 11 is a perfect example. John Ostrander is to be commended, not only for his great portrayal of a clergyman, but for clarifying one of many Biblical interpretations: the true nature of Judas' sin.

I just hope DC will follow Mr. Ostrander's lead. Perhaps we'll even get to see some honorable Protestant clergy?

John Q. Gerdes
P.O. Box 343
Collinsville, IL 62234

When John first suggested a positive clergyman in our book, I wholeheartedly supported the move. Then, I had a lot of fun writing the good Father in Nightshade's origin (despite my being totally areligious), so I encourage John to use the Father whenever possible. As to others following our lead, who can say? I'd like to think so.

*****

Dear John, Luke, and Bob,

I always enjoy "Personal Files"-type stories: they help to provide an entertaining breather, particularly following stories such as the Jihad two-parter. Next year, I'd like to see a "Personal Files" from Father Craemer's point of view.

The scene with Shade and Ifrit was entertaining. I'm glad he's beginning to get his "superior technology" arrogance shot down. Yvonne Callendar's flirtation with Shade was fun. I can't wait to see his "charm lessons."

The depiction of Briscoe as a homophobe was unexpected and believable, as was the reason for Sheba's name. Briscoe's homophobia helped emphasize that he is *far* from a hero, just an ordinary guy (with a few psychological problems) doing his job.

The discussion between Eve and Father Craemer was very well handled. The Reverend wins, hands down, the "nicest guy at Belle Reve" award (with Nemesis his closest competition, and Boomerang dead last). Even though his appearances have been few and brief, Father Craemer's personality has come through clearly.

Dr. Light was a lot of fun. Whatever you do, don't let this incompetent fool get killed on a Squad mission!

Erich Mees
3456 Spalding Drive
Dunwoody, GA 30350

*****

Dear Mr. Ostrander and company,

After nearly two years of publication, the SUICIDE SQUAD has finally reached the point where it has settled into itself and the DC Universe.

You have successfully created a stable but rotating cast, something that many "team" books fail to do. The reason for this is that most of those books rely on senseless and unwarranted bickering or utter loyalty to the team as a substitute for true characterization. The Squad members, however, have a richness and detail that, while not quite on a par with the phenomenal JUSTICE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL, still shines above most others. The yearly "Personal Files" stories seem specifically designed to expand on the characters we have become familiar with in recent issues. When was the last time any other titles (with the exception of JLI) spent an issue detailing *nothing* but relationships and interaction? I think it is obvious that Mr. Ostrander really enjoys working with and fleshing out the members and supporting cast of the Squad.

There's that phrase again. Supporting cast. I suppose no letter would be complete unless it praised Amanda Waller as one of the most interesting "supporting" cast members in superhero comics today. It might even be a disservice to refer to Mrs. Waller as a "supporting" character, as she is as integral a part of the Suicide Squad as any of the members. That, combined with her regular appearances in CHECKMATE! and cameos in other titles make her one of the *most* prominent "normal" characters in the DC Universe.

All these factors combine to make the Squad one of my most eagerly awaited titles each month, and I anxiously await further developments in the lives of all the members.

Den Elms
Address Withheld

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Dear John, Luke, and Bob,

For a while now (possibly seven years) I've been collecting comics and until now I've never stuck with one series from the beginning. The exceptional quality of SUICIDE SQUAD... I couldn't help but keep on collecting it. I won't babble on about how "awesome" and "enrapturing" though. I know I'm just wasting your time.

Still with me? Cool.

What I was going to say refers to Nightshade's part in "Personal Files." For a long time I've been searching for a comic that contains a trace of reverence. I think I may have finally found it. I would like to sincerely thank you for showing your

readers that there is more to comics than simply gunning down the bad guys. I think this may show all the religion fanatics of the world that DC, as well as yourselves, aren't the Satanic arch-rivals they imagine you to be. Thanks for shedding some new light on the comics industry.

Justin D. Maddox
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Dear John,

I just read SUICIDE SQUAD #19 and I loved it! The art was great but I can't wait to see it when Karl Kesel gets back.

One scene I really liked was the one with Briscoe; he's a great character who is seriously underused. He reminds me a lot of Floyd. Maybe when Floyd gets back from his mini-series, he and Briscoe could hang out together. And if you ever decide to give Deadshot his own series and have to take him out of the Squad, Briscoe would fill his space nicely.

I also enjoyed Nightshade's scene with Father Craemer. What he told Eve about her "pride in her sins," so to speak, really applied directly to my life, and what he said put me at ease, in a way. It helped me think of God in a new light.

But my favorite scene was the Duchess/Amanda scene. I've gotta admit I'm totally confused about why Duchess would pretend she has amnesia. And if she faked it, why did she act like she remembered Scott Free in issue #13 when she didn't have to say anything? But I do have some theories about her. 1) I guess it could be that she was tired of being a small fish in a large pond. 2) Or it could be that she is infiltrating the Squad for Darkseid so he can use them for his own twisted ends. 3) Maybe she admires Amanda as someone tough, quite possibly tougher than Granny Goodness. I mean, Granny Goodness follows orders to the letter, but Amanda's not afraid to challenge her superiors and if she can't deal with them with physical means or intimidation, she's not above *anything* else, short of killing.

I also liked the scene with Dr. Light. Maybe when he joins he can take over Boomer's spot as "team joke" and let Digger get down and dirty. I mean, if he's not an asset to the team, he has no use being on missions. And the panels with John falling back in his chair and Amanda's pencil fantasies—I think I'm sensing JLI humor rubbing off on the Squad. That's great. Just don't go to extremes with it; 'kay?

Donnie Matthews
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Dear Bob,

As usual, the latest issue of SUICIDE SQUAD had a lot of good things, because John writes such great characters. Framing the events was the Wall, who believes she's doing the right thing by leading the Squad but is unsure about the moral decisions she has to make, and intensely dislikes being dependent on a higher authority for ultimate backing, as this gives that authority power over her. In this case, Tolliver personifies that power, but maybe the information Stein seems to have dug up will take that millstone from around her neck. She also handled the fight between Briscoe and Sekofsky very well, demonstrating that she does have the leadership qualities the job demands, although I'm less sure about the way she handled Tolliver and Flag later in the day. But I was impressed with John's writing of Sekofsky. There are too few gay characters in comics, despite Luke's tendency to make many of the female Squadders look butch (and how interesting such a sexual orientation would be in the group), and having someone like Sekofsky casually in the background, yet openly homosexual and proud of it, is a nice touch.

As for Eve, her experiences during her "odyssey" have, naturally, left her somewhat mentally traumatized, and it's good to show her trying to pick up the pieces. She and the others are lucky to have Father Craemer around, and I hope there's no ulterior side to him. Also, Eve looks a lot like June Moone this issue, especially in profile—is this coincidence or deliberate?

It's taken Amanda a while to realize that Duchess is Lashina the Fury, and I wonder why she's been trying to hide that. Also, what will she do now that she knows Waller knows? There were quite a few little touches elsewhere that I really liked. The off-camera activities of Black Orchid continue to intrigue—and I'm waiting for her own mini-series with bated breath. Dr. Light's sniveling and paedophilic entrance and swift exit was another nice, fine link to the rest of the DC Universe, which John has a good handle on.

Finally, a few words on Luke McDonnell, whose art has never looked better than here and in the DEADSHOT series. I didn't like what he did on *Iron Man*, and in combination with Val Mayerik, a fine artist, he makes *Dreadstar* look positively robotic. But it must all be down to the inker, and Luke obviously needs one with a fine eye such as that of Bob or the returning Karl Kesel.

Malcolm Bourne
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England

The resemblance you refer to was probably an unintentional coincidence, especially with the more recent events to take into account. And now for our other regular British correspondent:

Dear Bob,

SUICIDE SQUAD #19 was a relatively "quiet" issue. By that I mean there was no blood-letting, no shoot-outs, no violence to speak of—physical violence, that is. There was plenty of emotional violence and it is this single factor of SUICIDE SQUAD that sets John Ostrander apart from many other comic book writers. The very make-up of the Squad is such that all personnel are constantly on the edge, Amanda Waller most of all, and John penned a marvelous human drama in portraying that constant tension. The sheer range of problems cropping up in Belle Reve, from Nightshade's worrying about her immortal soul to name-calling between Sekofsky and Briscoe to the (at last!) identification of Duchess as Lashina, made for fascinating reading. There are *so many* plot possibilities on the go in each issue, it's going to take *years* to cover them all. For instance, is Darkseid going to allow Duchess to remain on Earth, or is he going to have her "sent for," as he did with G. Gordon Godfrey? What is Black Orchid looking for? And what will happen if/when someone calls Waller's bluff in a situation such as Flag faced on page 20? (No, I don't think she was bluffing.)

Three pages of Suicide Notes? Well, two and bit actually, but I'm heartened that SS seems to be eliciting so many responses, and such thoughtful ones, too. T.M. Maple's comments, as usual, were of great interest, and I'd like to add that "a good story," as he put it, can not only make up for a lot of deficiencies in structure, but can result in turning such "deficiencies" into positive aspects of future storylines. I think the matter of Duchess's identity having been left hanging for so long was originally a lapse on John's part, but it led to a great scene between Amanda and Duchess this month and should make for some interesting moments in the near future.

I can't go without yet again praising the artwork. Luke McDonnell and Bob Lewis may never have the same following of the likes of Art Adams or Kevin Maguire, but for my money they are one of the most exciting pairings in comics today.

Dale Coe
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England

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COMING ATTRACTIONS

The Squad's secret is out and Congress is beginning hearings into Amanda Waller's actions. Will she perjure herself and protect the secret of Checkmate? Will the Squad be disbanded? Luke, Karl, and I will see you here in a month. Until then, happy holidays and have a Happy New Year!

—Bob Greenberger